



National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG)

Interagency Helicopter Operations Sub- Committee Annual Workshop January 21, 2026

Present:

Joe Rogan, BLM
Eric Graff, USFS
Taylor Schmadeka, NASF
David Frey, OAS
John Waddell, USFS
Tori Leshuk, USFS
Jonathan Lindley, OAS
Chris Wright, FWS

Jamie Knight, States (Notetaker)
David Schultz, NWCG
Cathy Jo Carter, NWCG (IPTM)
Nicole Oke, NWCG (IPTM)
Brittany Spence, NWCG (IPTM)
Kelly Houghton, NWCG (IPTM)

November Meeting Notes Approval:

Notes approved by the group.

NWCG Stewardship Briefing for S-372 Revision

IPTM group gave a presentation on the IPTM process and what to expect going forward with the S-372 rewrite.

- Goal of IPTM
- Roles and responsibilities of the position steward
- Scope and deliverables
- SME expectations
- Lead SME expectations
- Liaison expectations
- What is next?

IPTM group will make a pdf of the PowerPoint that was shared for this group to reference. Will HMLR be considered for this update? NIAC is working on the HMLR evaluation decision right now. The group is aware of the “new” position and will consider it as this process rolls out.

HMLR NWCG Waiver Update

As noted above, NIAC is working on the evaluation decision right now. Eric and Tori will be working on the official waiver ask through USFS and will present more to the group (possibly at the in-person meeting).

Annual Meeting in Boise February 18-19

Due to the competing meetings, the in-person meeting will be postponed, date TBD. There will be no February meeting. Next meeting will be held on March 18th.

Annual Meeting Topics

N/A

Chair Transition

Due to changes on DOI side, the plan is to transition the Chair position to Eric Graff prior to the mandatory date in June. This will provide the group with consistent oversight as the unification/reorganization process occurs. The group who was present voted unanimously in favor of the early transition.

Vice Chair will be Taylor Schmadeka (NASF Representative).

Jamie will be leaving as notetaker. If the group can find someone to replace that position, they would be welcomed. Dave Frey and/or Eric Graff might have someone to take notes.

Round Robin:

National Association of State Foresters: Gearing up for season. Training is being conducted. Contracting is occurring.

BLM: Anticipating upcoming changes. Status quo for now.

USFS: Lots of meetings going on right now. Southeast Region/Florida has a handful of aircraft on. Region 3 may see early aircraft as well. Met with NIAC on HMLR waiver.

FWS: Southeast was kind of dry, but there is an arctic blast with a lot of snow being forecasted. Florida is still looking at dry conditions and a need for aircraft. Burning has started off slowly, but the incoming moisture should speed that up.

NWCG: Next month, Sarah Lee is transitioning into NWCG Coordinator for all aviation needs.

OAS: A-225 refresher for instructors. Webinar schedule will be picked up when the new hires are announced and qualifications are determined.

Next Meeting is March 18th, 2026